

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

081548Z Nov 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 000193

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/4/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CA](#) [ECON](#)

SUBJECT: CG MEETING WITH PQ LEADER LANDRY

CLASSIFIED BY: Abigail Friedman, CG, QUEBEC CITY, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

CLASSIFIED BY: Abigail Friedman, CG, QUEBEC CITY, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) Summary: CG met with Parti Quebecois (PQ) opposition leader Bernard Landry October 28 at his National Assembly office and received a crash course on Quebec history and the separatist movement in what was her first encounter with the former PQ Premier. Despite intense internal wrangling within PQ ranks and challenges to Landry's leadership, the PQ leader appeared unfazed and confidently assured CG that Quebec would be an independent nation within five to ten years. End summary.

2. (C) Landry, a 35-year PQ veteran who led Quebec as Premier from 2001-03, established his longstanding relationship with the Quebec City consulate and his party's commitment to Quebec-U.S. relations. Landry said Quebec is the most pro-American of the ten Canadian provinces. The U.S.-Canada free trade agreement, fiercely resisted by the Mulroney government in Ottawa at the time, would not have passed had the then-PQ Quebec government not taken a strong favorable position, he added. Landry sees the trend for the Americas as being one of further economic integration along a European Union model. He characterized Quebec as an economic powerhouse: The tenth-ranked economic force of the OECD, half of Canada's high technology products come from Quebec and one out of two books published in Canada are from Quebec.

3. (C) Taking an almost professorial tone, Landry told CG that "understanding Quebec is both simple and complex" but one thing all Quebecers fundamentally agree upon is that Quebec forms a "nation." The Quebec National Assembly unanimously recognized this fact in a motion presented before the legislature several months ago. Landry said that over the last 10 years, 30 countries had established their nationhood, including the Ukraine and other former Soviet and Balkan states. He believes the Quebec sovereignty option is far from being a marginal movement and he sees Quebec as moving inexorably toward independence.

4. (C) Landry argued that Quebec independence would be a reality before long because of the mathematics of generational change. According to him, 60 percent of young Quebecers support the option of sovereignty today. Young voters who supported the PQ in the 1970s and 1980s are today's older voters, and they, too, continue to support sovereignty. Landry pointed to a CROP-La Presse poll released October 28, which concluded that the PQ would have won Provincial government elections had they been called in October. In that poll, 63 percent of voters expressed dissatisfaction with the Charest government. Support for sovereignty stood at 47 percent.

5. (C) On the dynamics of federal-provincial relations, Bernard Landry said the sizeable presence of the Bloc Quebecois (BQ) in Ottawa -- Gilles Duceppe holds 54 of the 75 federal seats in the province -- ought to give it leverage with Martin's minority government. But this was not happening. Instead, the BQ has exasperated the rest of Canada, he said. According to Landry, PM Martin knows his party cannot win Quebec in the next election and his best bet is to increase voter support in Ontario and Alberta.

Comment

6. (C) The PQ is presently in disarray, and Landry himself conceded as much in his meeting with the CG. He argued, however, that the PQ is merely digesting the loss of the last election and will come out of this period of political soul-searching stronger and ready to take power. Whether Landry retains leadership of the party after this soul-searching remains to be seen. The next party congress, where Landry's mandate is up for renewal, is scheduled for June, 2005. Between now and then, Landry will be focused on fending off challenges to unseat him.

FRIEDMAN